Castlemaine Naturalist

March 2022

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Monthly newsletter of the Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus)* on a Buddleja flower, Gingell St, Castlemaine. *Photo by Euan Moore*

The Botanic Gardens *Angophoras*

Blooming at present, on the western side of the Castlemaine Botanic Gardens opposite the Tea House, are a group of *Angophora floribunda* trees. We scarcely notice them for the rest of the year, but they repay our attention just now.

George Broadway has produced an excellent little brochure on the "Significant Trees of the Castlemaine Botanic Gardens" (recently revised and on our website) and #333-337 feature the Rough-barked Apple Myrtles (in Qld and NSW they are often called Apple Box). There is no doubt they are "gum trees" though!

I first knew these trees in the grounds of our sons' small primary school on the outskirts of Brisbane. I regularly took groups of Grades 3 and 4 children on Bird Walks – it was an old school on 13 acres, sloping down from the classrooms through scrubby bush to a creek fringed with subtropical rainforest. Lovely for birds.

We would first talk about where to look, and they pointed to the large eucalypts, mainly the Forest Red Gum *(E. tereticornis).* Then they told me about "the curly trees". These were the *Angophora floribunda*, and had a different form to the tall, straight-limbed Forest Gums.

So the kids were right, the Apple Myrtles do have "curly" limbs. Maybe hard to see in the photo; have a look the next time you are in CBG.

There are other differences, as George tells us: the leaves are opposite, not alternate, and the blooms are held on the *outside* of the tree, rather than within the branches. In addition, *Angophoras* do not have a cap (or *corymb*) to their flowers, unlike the other eucalypts.

Leaves in opposite positions along stem, not alternate as in *Eucalyptus sp.*

Flowers and buds

Many years later when I was a volunteer at Geelong Botanic Gardens, our group went to WA for a meeting of Botanic Gardens Guides. We had a wonderful talk about plant evolution and learned about the development of eucalypts: first within humid rainforests which dominated Gondwana around 50 million years ago. Gradually the forests started to dry and true eucalypts developed about 30 million years ago.

The early ones needed to stand out in the dense forests for pollination, hence what we see today, *Angophora* flowers on the outside of the trees – this is also the case with *Corymbias*, to some extent, and they too, are early eucs.

P.S. A recent paper describes an alternative evolutionary pathway for eucalypts, so it is a case of watch this space for now!

Photos and article by Rosemary Turner

Wild Taiwan

February meeting talk by Euan Moore

We are very grateful to Euan for kindly stepping in to speak at our February meeting when unfortunately our scheduled guest speaker, Tanya Loos, had to withdraw at short notice. We will reschedule Tanya's talk on Bird Strike later in the year. Euan gave a wonderful presentation about a trip he and I did to Taiwan a few years ago. Taiwan was a country of surprises with a fascinating and diverse local flora and fauna, and impressive, central mountain ranges. We arranged for a local guide to take us on an 11-day tour around the island highlighting national parks and other natural areas. Richard is originally from Ireland but now settled in Taiwan with his family, so he is

Taiwan Barbet

fluent in both English and Chinese. A keen hiker and naturalist, he made an excellent guide for us, organising all the travel in his car as well as accommodation and meals at an incredibly reasonable price. Taiwanese food is exceptional!

Euan compared the size of Taiwan to the area of eastern Victoria south of the Great Dividing Range and east of Melbourne. The country is one of the most densely populated in the world, but the population of over 20 million is concentrated on the western third of the island, leaving large areas of natural forests and wetlands sparsely populated. Near the larger cities such as the capital Taipei are gardens and national parks, well maintained for the large numbers of locals enjoying the outdoors. We soon managed to see several of the endemic birds such as the striking Taiwan Blue Magpie and Taiwan Barbet on these trails before meeting up with Richard.

The spectacular Taroko Gorge

Our journey then took us through a long tunnel across to the east coast where we visited Yilan County wetlands and fish farms to see herons, waterfowl and shorebirds. The Taroko Gorge (Taroko National Park) was spectacular, seen best from suspension bridges and narrow walks cut high up into the sides of the mountains! Here we saw the Taiwan Yuhina and Taiwan Whistling Thrush. The Taroko Road is one of the few crossing the island. It starts near sea level and climbs to almost 3300m before descending to the western lowlands. As we moved up into the high country the vegetation changed from tropical rainforest through temperate deciduous forest, montane pine forest and finally alpine bamboo grasslands. At the highest levels we saw the claret-coloured Vinaceous Rosefinch and the White-whiskered Laughing Thrush. We also spent time in the densely forested slopes of the Dasyueshan National Forest Recreation Area on the western side of the island, seeking out the spectacular endemic pheasants (Mikado and Swinhoe's) which we were fortunate to see quite quickly, while the local paparazzi had spent days waiting with their long lenses. The Taiwanese are very keen bird photographers.

Mikado Pheasant, male

Indian Pipe (*Monotropa uniflora*)

Overall we saw a total of 153 bird species including most of the endemic species and sub-species. Our tour took us through representative areas for many different vegetation communities, and Euan captured fine examples of the amazing tropical and alpine flora on camera. We also saw several endemic mammals, in particular a beautiful Red and White Giant Flying Squirrel on a spot-lighting walk.

Throughout our trip, we had stimulating discussions with Richard on strategies for the protection of the natural assets in our respective countries. He made a special effort to engage members of indigenous communities for local guides. At the conclusion of Euan's talk, we realised that one of our members, Yvonne Hsu, was actually listening from Taiwan where she was visiting her family! She had enjoyed learning more about her native country and wildlife!

Jenny Rolland (photos by Euan Moore)

Bird Poster for Ellery House and Penhall Hostel

We were recently contacted by Ellery House resident and previous long-term CFNC member, Penny Garnett, to see if we could help with producing a page of photographs of birds which could be seen in the garden. The Recreation Team of Ellery House, Castlemaine Health, had asked Penny to help them with this task as some residents had shown an interest in identifying the birds. Penny asked if we could help source the photographs. While Penny admitted she was more of a "plant person" she sent a list of bird species that she thought should be included.

We were unable to visit the gardens due to COVID restrictions but Damian Kelly, Euan Moore and myself added to the list and came up with 24 bird species that we thought would be most likely seen in the gardens. I then assembled photographs of these birds from Damian and Euan's collections for the poster. Staff member Andrea printed and laminated several copies for the residents of both Ellery House and Penhall Hostel.

With thanks for our efforts, Andrea declared the poster was "well received". A satisfying job, helping residents keep their contact with and enjoyment of nature.

Jenny Rolland

Carmen enjoying the bird guide

February Excursion – Mt Alexander

On a balmy 26 degree sunny afternoon eight members and one visitor met at the Leanganook picnic area on Mt Alexander for the walk across to Cockatoo Rocks, that magnificent slab of granite overlooking Harcourt and, further south, Castlemaine. The substantial Lightwood trees (*Acacia implexa)* along the drive up to the mountain were flowering, as were the smaller ones along the track such as a specimen with a very full and attractive crown of healthy leaves and flowers despite its spindly and broken looking trunk. Other plants in flower were Slender Rice Flower (*Pimelea linifolia*) - scattered plants; Yellow Rush-Lily (*Tricoryne elatior*) - with 3 yellow petals and 3 slightly longer and narrower sepals, and a customary twisted spent flower; Bluebell (*Wahlenbergia* sp.); Sticky Everlasting (*Xerochrysum viscosum*) and *Hackelia* (formerly *Cynoglossom*) *suaveolens* (Sweet Hound's-Tongue).

Lightwood *(Acacia implexa)*

Other identifiable plants that prompted some discussion were: *Carex appressa* (Tall Sedge) with its rigid triangular stems; *Acaena novae-zelandiae* (Bidgee-Widgee) with its round sock-loving seed heads; *Juncus palidus* (Pale Rush) with its pale brown seed heads and *Senecio quadridentatus* (Cottony Fireweed) with its white cottony leaf surfaces.

White-throated Treecreeper with insect

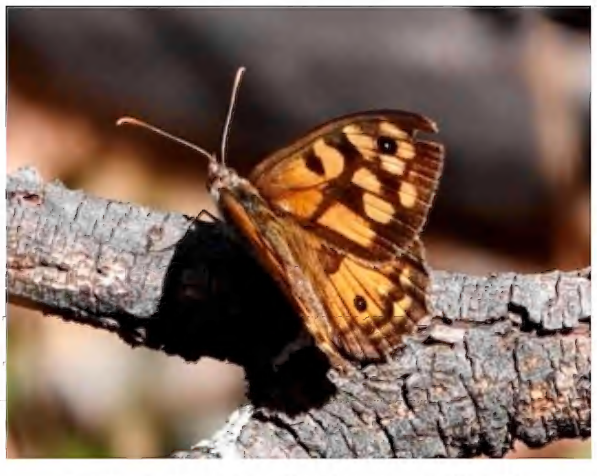
The woodland traversed by the track, littered with fallen branches and whole trees, was cleared of all timber in the 1870s, according to the Parks Vic leaflet. If so, the many very large old trees escaped further attacks, having developed large hollows. There are some fine Cherry Ballart (*Exocarpis cupressiformis)*. Manna Gums (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) were recognisable by the persistent bark at the base of the trunks and the conspicuous long ribbons of bark that get caught in the branch axils. The 3-4 valves of the fruit are exserted above the rim. We wondered why the koalas established within a nearby fenced section on the mountain decided to leave when they were released. Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*) were also present. A couple of large finely fibrous barked trees with dense crowns of fine dark green leaves and cupular (cup shaped) fruit were eventually identified as Narrow-leaved Peppermints.

We heard a number of birds along the way, and saw some - especially a White-

throated Treecreeper investigating a trunk just above us. Many brown butterflies flittered around us, some smaller ones identified as Marbled (Klug's) Xenica (*Geitoneura klugii).* A few Dragonflies were seen, including a Blue Skimmer (*Orthetrum caledonicum*). More birds were noted as we sat around after the walk for picnic meals – an enjoyable end to an enjoyable excursion.

Bird List	No.		No.
Common Bronzewing	1	Buff-rumped Thornbill	1
Laughing Kookaburra	1	Brown Thornbill	3
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	1	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	1
Crimson Rosella	3	Australian Magpie	2
White-throated Treecreeper	3	Grey Fantail	6
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	2	White-winged Chough	5
Red Wattlebird	8		

Blue Skimmer (*Orthetrum caledonicum*)



Marbled Xenica (*Geitoneura klugii)*

Peter Turner, Geraldine Harris (plants), Euan Moore (birdlist), Cathrine Harboe-Ree (photos)

Vale John Landy 1930–2022 – runner, governor and environmentalist

We note with sadness the passing of John Landy, a member of the Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club who especially enjoyed reading the "Castlemaine Naturalist" in his later years thanks to George Broadway. Although well known as an Olympic runner and former Governor of Victoria, John was also a passionate environmentalist. He authored two books on natural history, "Close to Nature, a Naturalist's Diary of a Year in the Bush" (1984) and "A Coastal Diary, a Study of one of Australia's Wildest and Most Beautiful Coastlines" (1993), and he was a foundation member of the Land Conservation Council. He had a particular interest in butterflies. Over the years, he accumulated a large and valuable collection of specimens, which he eventually donated to the Australian Museum in Sydney in 2018. We thank John for his contributions to our understanding and protection of our natural environment, and extend our sympathy to his family and friends.

Birds of Sutton Grange February 2022 – Nigel Harland

Superb Fairywren	Red Wattlebird	Eastern Spinebill
White-browed Scrubwren	Galah	Musk Lorikeet
Australian Magpie	New Holland Honeyeater	Red-rumped Parrot
Australian Raven	Common Bronzewing	House Sparrow
Laughing Kookaburra	Striated Pardalote	Black-eared Cuckoo*
Long-billed Corella	Grey Shrike-thrush	Silvereye
Crimson Rosella	Eurasian Blackbird	Grey Fantail
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Grey Currawong	Yellow-tufted Honeyeater
Brown-headed Honeyeater	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	White-throated Treecreeper
New Holland Honeyeater	Eastern Rosella	Brown Thornbill
Welcome Swallow	Red-browed Finch	White-eared Honeyeater

Eastern Spinebill is an irregular visitor. Just wanted a drink before moving on.

Musk Lorikeet didn't even stay, a pair just flew over and I happened to be in the right place at the right time.

Nice to see a group of five Red-rumped Parrots, seemingly wanting water from the bird baths.

House Sparrows are not common, wish I had a gun!

* Refer to separate article below.

Where are the raptors? Gone with the rabbits?

An Unexpected Visitor - Nigel Harland

Sometimes we sit outside with a glass of wine looking at the birds that visit our birdbaths. Usually we see birds that come to visit on a regular basis, but occasionally something arises that looks a bit different and it makes you think that it might be a bird that has arrived unexpectedly. This happened recently with us. Looking at all the usual suspects, we suddenly saw something that didn't fit the pattern. It was the size of a honeyeater, but lacked any of the known markings. It also had a smallish, down-curved bill. The only other marking of note was a black marking from the eye towards the body - not significant, but noticeable.

The next stage in times like these is to get out the field guide. All of the features led me to open it in the cuckoo section. It was clearly not one of the bronze cuckoos, but my eye was taken by the Black-eared Cuckoo. Field guide drawings can often be a bit misleading and juvenile plumage can be slightly different to full adult plumage. I scanned other pages for possibilities, but found nothing of note. We waited a while hoping for a repeat performance, but nothing appeared. Reading the distribution notes, I discovered that it can be a summer migrant to more southern climes.

Sorry I can't show you a photo, but my only conclusion (perhaps 99% certain) is that it was a Black-eared Cuckoo and a new bird for my property list.

Wherever you are, always take your binoculars!

Observations (Wildlife, March 1944)

George Broadway

Specimens sent in by readers of "Wildlife" Magazine in March 1944.

First: news on the fire front. Following the disastrous bush fires of 1944, a committee has been set up to investigate and make recommendations. Sound familiar?

Platypus: In 1788 one of two stuffed specimens was sent to Dr George Shaw of the British Museum. After exhaustive tests to decide that it was not a hoax, he named the animal *Platypus anatinus.* "Flat-footed creature like a duck". However some years earlier, an obscure German entomologist had given the name Platypus to a small flat-footed wood-boring beetle, so according to the rules, the name had to be changed. Meanwhile Sir Joseph Banks had sent the other specimen to a German anatomist, Dr Johann Blumenbach. He decided to call it *Ornithorhynchus paradoxus,* "Creature with a bird's beak which is a paradox". However the rules state that Shaw's species should stick, so the creature is now known as *Ornithorhynchus anatinus,* thus providing a spelling challenge for many a subsequent school student.

The main news however was that the pair in the Healesville sanctuary had successfully hatched an egg.

Insects

Caulfield: Green Vegetable Bug, *Nezara viridula*, frequently submitted. Only recently introduced to gardens south of the divide. Pest of beans, tomatoes and other vegetables. All too familiar now. Also from Hawthorn.

Malvern: Checkered Hunting Beetle, *Trogodendron,* recognized by the black plush epaulettes and "coat-tails" on grey ground, and bright yellow feelers on the head. Feeds on other insects, capable of a fierce bite but is not venomous. If divided between thorax and abdomen the two parts can function independently for some time because the brain is so diffuse. Also from Oakleigh.

Essendon: a cicada nymph.

Northcote: Young specimen of Hubners Case-moth, *Hyalarcta hubneri.*

Upwey: Egg case of larger Praying Mantis, very light and frothy. Also cocoon of Furry Grass Caterpillar, *Anthela acuta.*

Brunswick: Wasp in cocoon of Emperor Gum Moth: *Lissopimpla,* a parasitic wasp, stings caterpillar laying egg inside- caterpillar pupates- wasp larva eats chrysalis- wasp pupates – adult wasp hatches.

Essendon: The long spike on the tail of the female long-headed grasshopper is an ovipositor, used for laying eggs in crevices.

Seaford: Fiddler Beetle *Eupoecila australasiea.* So-called because of the bright yellow stripes on the back in the shape of an old fashioned fiddle. Feeds on the blossoms of Angophora. Also from Healesville and Box Hill.

Point Lonsdale: Large Mason Wasp *Abispa*, one which builds a mud nest which it stocks with a paralysed spider. Also from Moama.

Brunswick: Silver-streaked Vine hawk Moth. The larva is a pest on grape vines.

Tooan: Large Assassin Bug, *Reduviid.* Feeds on harmful insects.

Footscray: Painted Apple Moth, *Orgia anartoides*. Wingless Female. Male has wings with splotches of yellow. Once fed on wattle leaves, now fond of apple leaves.

Hampton: Cocoon of Cup Moth.

Cohuna: Cocoon of Emperor Gum Moth.

Cavendish: Male Emperor Gum Moth. Also Melbourne.

General

Gembrook: Horse-hair worm, found in fresh water, harmless. Also Geelong.

Swan Island: A dolphin, definitely not an alligator nor a crocodile.

Ringwood: Possum Glider. Food - blossoms, tender leaves and insects.

Ferny Creek: Baby Tiger Snake, too small to be dangerous.

Spiders

Gardenvale: Large Orb-web Spider, *Epeira*. Beautifully marked and sculptured, seen at largest and best in Autumn.

Carlton: Not really a spider, *Scutigera,* House Centipede or Johnny Hairylegs. Welcome as house guest as it eats harmful insects. Also Hawthorn.

Canterbury: Tan Crab spider, allied to the Huntsman.

Commercial (from George)

Wanted – good home for a set of "Victorian Naturalist" magazines, from Vol 84 No1. Jan 1967 to Vol 130. No 2. April 2013. Storage space no longer available.

Do you have a suggested amendment or addition to the *Castlemaineflora* website?

The club's invaluable website, *Wild Plants of the Castlemaine District* (www.castlemaineflora.org.au), is based on the plant identification and reference guide produced by the late Ern Perkins. A Working Group has been established to manage the maintenance and updating of the website as required, with an expert editorial panel to review proposed changes and approve updates to the text and photos.

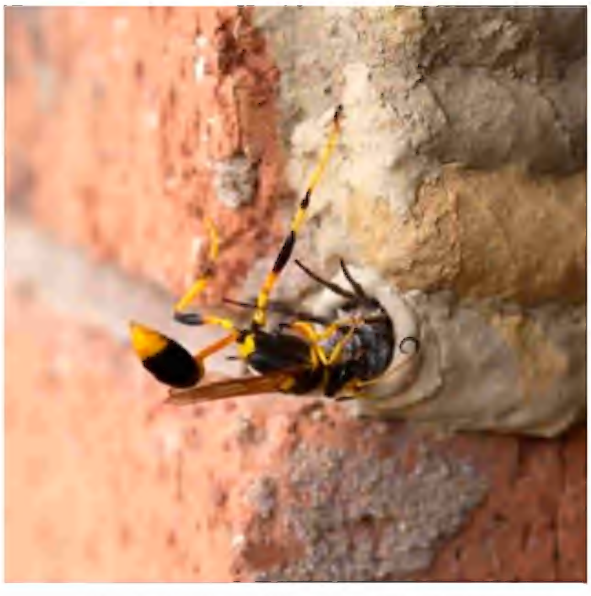
Users who have proposals for additions or corrections are asked to email these to the CFNC email address (castlemainefnc@hotmail.com). These will be forwarded by the CFNC Secretary to the Working Group. Proposals should clearly identify the plant, the proposed changes (to descriptive text, additional photograph, etc) and provide contact information (email, phone). When suggesting changes to text please make sure to include the location of the page and previous text along with clearly outlined additional comments.

Peter Turner, Convenor, Flora Guide Working Group

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

Observations

Blue Ringtail (*Austrolestes annulosus*), Baringhup. Kerrie Jennings



Mud-dauber Wasp (*Sceliphron spirifex*) packing prey into its mud nest, Barkers Creek. Mick Evans

Imperial Hairstreak (*Jalmenus evagoras)* with attendant ants on Acacia – hatching, mating. Shepherds Flat. Jill Williams

Orange-backed Robberfly (*Mauropteron pelago),* Castlemaine. Assassin flies are ferocious predators of other insects. Euan Moore

Geraldine Harris February observations from our place at Barkers Creek.

3/2/22 Jarrod Harris noticed adult and juvenile turtles bathing in the sun on the edge of the dam.

23/2/22 As soon as I cleaned and added fresh water to our birdbaths this morning, I was rewarded as 19 different birds species (see list below) came to one of them!

White-plumed, Brown-headed, Yellow-faced, New Holland, White-naped and

Fuscous Honeyeaters	Red-browed Finches	White-browed Scrubwren
Superb Fairy Wrens	Eastern Shrike-tit	Eastern Yellow Robin
Red-rumped Parrot	Spotted Pardalotes	Grey Shrike-thrush
Eastern Rosella	Striated Pardalotes	Dusky Woodswallow
Brown Treecreeper	Red Wattlebird	

COMING EVENTS

MONTHLY MEETING: Friday 11th March, 7.30pm

by Zoom (see details for joining on the back page)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING The 2022 AGM will be held by Zoom before the usual monthly meeting observations and talk. The AGM agenda will include the Annual Report for 2021, the Treasurer's Report, and the election of office bearers and committee members for 2022. All positions on the committee will be open, so you are encouraged to consider joining the committee. Members with a range of skills and interests are welcome. For more information, please contact the President or one of the committee members. Nomination forms are included with this newsletter and completed forms should reach the Secretary (castlemainefnc@hotmail.com) before the meeting.

Membership fees: At the February meeting, members passed the motion that membership fees are unchanged for 2022.

Speakers: Geraldine & Geoff Harris – "Exploring Outback Queensland's National Parks"

Long-time tent campers, Geoff and Geraldine Harris bought a Cub camper trailer at the end of 2019. Their travel plans were put on hold when Covid hit in early 2020, so when borders opened temporarily in mid-June 2021, they set off to explore outback Queensland. However, having reached the Gulf and heading south towards Birdsville, their plans to return home in early August were thwarted by a sudden SA border closure. Uncertain when this border might reopen they decided to drive to the tip of Cape York. During their four months away they visited over 30 National Parks and conservation properties. Join them at the March meeting for some pictorial highlights of their adventures.

EXCURSION: Saturday 12th March 9.30am – Crusoe Reservoir

Leaders: Euan Moore & Jenny Rolland

Enjoy a morning with the birds at the Crusoe Reservoir, Bendigo. The complete walk around the reservoir is about 3.3km, but there are seats along the way and options for turning back at any time. The path is largely flat. In addition to water and shore birds, we should see a variety of other birds as we walk through a range of vegetation communities from open grasslands, to shrubby corridors and taller forests. We will see many examples of revegetation and habitat restoration. Beginner birdwatchers and families welcome.

Meet: Meet at the Octopus at **9am** or at the Crusoe Reservoir car-park at **9.30am**. The car-park is off Crusoe Road, Kangaroo Flat at the northern end of the reservoir.

Bring: Binoculars, water, snacks, sturdy shoes and hat. BYO chairs, drinks and food for a picnic after the walk. There are toilets at the car park.

The Field Trip is subject to COVID restrictions on the day and will be cancelled in extreme weather conditions or if there is a high fire risk.

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club

PROGRAM

Monthly meetings will continue to be held on-line via ZOOM until further notice, commencing at 7.30pm. If you have registered for our previous webinar meetings you will be sent the link for registering with Zoom. If you have not joined before and wish to attend, please email Peter Turner at munrodsl@iinet.net.au

Our guest speaker(s) will follow the usual 'observations' session when members can share recent interesting sightings with an option to show a photo or two. If you have photos for the meeting, please email JPEG file(s) to Euan Moore at calamanthus5@bigpond.com by noon on the day of the meeting.

Excursions are on the Saturday after the monthly meeting. Meet at the Octopus (opposite the motel in Duke St) for departure at 1.30pm unless otherwise advised.

Fri Mar 11 Meeting: AGM. Speakers – Geraldine & Geoff Harris "Exploring Outback Queensland's National Parks"

Sat Mar 12 Excursion: 9.30am "Crusoe Reservoir bird walk" with Euan Moore & Jenny Rolland

Fri Apr 8 Meeting: Speaker – Ian Higgins "Prevention of further plant loss in the Mt Alexander region"

Sat Apr 9 Excursion: "Campbells Creek Landcare restoration work" with Ian Higgins.

Fri May 13 Meeting: Speaker – Peter Jacobs (Invasive Species Council) "Feral deer - managing and monitoring."

Sat May 14 Excursion ALL DAY: 10am "A visit to Seeding Victoria's seed bank, Creswick." Optional afternoon walk - the La Gerche walk, Creswick SF.

Castlemaine Naturalist - email newsletter material to: newsletter.cfnc@gmail.com
* Deadline for the April edition: **25th March**

Club website (Webmaster: Ron Wescott) – www.castlemainefieldnaturalists.org.au

Subscriptions for 2022 (Membership forms on CFNC website)

Ordinary membership: Single $35, Family $50
Pensioner or student: Single $25, Family $30
Subscription includes the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist.

2021 Committee

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